U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command moves forward; reflects former commander's legacy

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For the past three years, while serving as the commander of the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command, Maj. Gen. Doug Gabram made it his personal mission to increase Army Aviation and Missile readiness. Daily checks on Army-wide Aviation and Missile readiness rates, checking on the status of industry supply chain parts on hand, production redundancy and leading others to airworthiness solutions that maximized readiness are but a few of the myriad tasks Gabram carried out to make sure he had a good site picture of the Army's Aviation and Missile readiness.

Gabram relinquished command last month after three years at the helm, but the processes and programs he built that have already improved sustainment and Army readiness will be his enduring legacy to American Soldiers.

"We have to be ready to fight tonight," Gabram was fond of saying. "And to do that, our aircraft and our missile systems have to be fully mission capable."

An aircraft or missile system that needs a part to make it fully mission capable is dependent on the supply chain to deliver that part. Building supply chain depth – and the resulting Army readiness it brings– is the legacy Gabram left behind when he relinquished command, Feb. 14, 2019.

AMCOM develops and delivers readiness to Soldiers and joint warfighters around the globe. AMCOM and the units under its operational control ensure that Army Aviation and Missile capabilities – which support nearly every Army operation across the globe – are available to meet the combatant commander's requirements, wherever and whenever needed.

In terms of Army commands, AMCOM is a fledgling organization stood up in July 1997, merging the Army's missile and aviation life-cycle management commands. The organization grew in 1998 when AMCOM assumed operational control of Corpus Christi Army Depot and Letterkenny Army Depot. Then, in 2003, AMCOM assumed operational control of all aviation logistics management functions at Fort Rucker, Alabama. The Aviation Center Logistics Command was formally activated on Aug. 5, 2004 to provide quality aviation sustainment, logistics and materiel in support of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command training mission at Fort Rucker; Fort Bliss, Texas; and Fort Benning, Georgia.

In 2005, AMCOM joined with PEO Aviation and PEO Missiles and Space to form the Aviation and Missile Life Cycle Management Command, the first life-cycle management command, which provides integrated engineering, logistics and contracting support to more than 90 major support systems.

Gabram assumed command Feb. 18, 2016. Under his watch, Gabram established several processes that represented a departure from just-in-time maintenance logistics the Army had defaulted to over the past 15 years: The first-ever AMCOM Campaign Plan, identifying the need and solutions for building supply chain depth; and engaging with industry partners to eliminate single pints of failure and increase production, just to name a few.

One of the Gabram command team's first initiatives was to develop a comprehensive command plan, a framework to ensure capabilities are aligned with the required outputs to the Army. AMCOM's Campaign Plan, developed in the spring of 2017, weaves the critical core competencies into effective, output-driven lines of effort. These lines of effort serve as a roadmap to enable readiness, support the future force and provide trained, resilient and ready employees who are focused on delivering key outputs for the Army.

"We are focusing on near-term priorities and requirements, but keeping in mind that we are supporting an ever-evolving Army," Gabram said. "AMCOM will ensure that our time, money, workload and initiatives are focused on operational outcomes."

The campaign plan laid out AMCOM's four main lines of effort. The first, "Sustainable and Materiel Readiness," supports the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Mark Milley's, top priority, readiness. "We will always be ready to fight today, and we will always prepare to fight tomorrow," Milley wrote in his intial message to the Army, in September 2015.

"This LOE is focused on our strategic, operational and tactical sustainment goals," Gabram explained. "It includes initiatives such as optimizing the supply chain, optimizing depot performance and divestment of excess materiel."

The second LOE, "Future Force," addresses agile sustainment across the system life-cycle, as well as developing and executing Army investments in future force capabilities. The relationship and information sharing between AMCOM, PEO Aviation and the Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team is just one example of how AMCOM, as a life-cycle management command, is coordinating with other units to ensure future aviation platforms are sustainable.

The third LOE is the "Human Dimension." "We are only as effective as each individual member of our workforce," Gabram said. "We are investing in developing and retaining a workforce of excellence, an adaptable team of professionals." The command is comprised of more than 7,800 civilian and military employees. The majority are stationed at Redstone Arsenal, but AMCOM has employees stationed across the globe. Under Gabram's leadership, the command worked hand-in-hand with the civilian career managers and military leaders to develop and implement several development programs to help employees grow professionally. "Our goal is to build flexible and adaptive leaders and multi-skilled Soldiers and civilians," Gabram said.

The fourth LOE is "Resource Management." "Everything revolves around our resources," Gabram said. "The command always did a good job of presenting the quantitative money requirements, but we weren't doing a good job of outlining the quantitative requirements. We weren't answering the 'Why'." Under Gabram's leadership, AMCOM shaped the internal organizations, financial resources and priorities so that we had the right outcomes at the right

time and the right cost for our Warfighters. The command now is able to show a direct correlation between AMCOM's outputs and operational impacts.

Under Gabram's leadership, the AMCOM team also took a hard look at every aspect of sustainment, specifically strategic depth in the supply chain.

"We are planning for a near-peer engagement and we have to think about how do we get to strategic depth [in our supply chain] so we can take that punch," he said.

Gabram often spoke of the "Art of the Possible." The term refers to making progress and moving on rather than being driven to complete immobility by the desire to be perfect. It turned out to be an effective approach in sustaining materiel readiness and, more specifically, working toward strategic depth in the supply chain.

In order to better deliver readiness and improve materiel availability to Soldiers on current Aviation and Missile platforms, Gabram and the command's senior leaders developed a systematic approach in order to meet future requirements.

"We are not just chasing parts anymore. We are building processes and partnerships to achieve strategic depth," Gabram said. "We have developed an action plan for each task."

Gabram planned and held regular meetings with the Organic Equipment Manufacturers to ensure that industry members are employing speed, accuracy and quality in delivering parts.

Gabram also looked inside his formation for solutions, one of which was empowering the more than 190 AMCOM Logistics Assistance Representatives (LARs) who support Army units around the world. These representatives are subject matter experts on various pieces of Army equipment who work in motor pools, hangars, maintenance shops and offices across the Army, including combat zones. At the unit-level, commanders and Soldiers count on LARs to help produce readiness, identify problems and – at times -- assist with resolutions. LARs give commanders the technical guidance to identify, report and resolve logistics issues that could have an adverse effect on logistics readiness. That support includes supply availability, maintenance, transportation, personnel systems and doctrinal issues, among others. AMCOM's LARS provided reachback that increased readiness at the AMCOM Logistics Center and saved the Army millions of dollars.

"Looking back, as a field commander at multiple levels during many deployments, I never worried about parts. They were always there. I didn't truly understand what was behind the supply chain. Now I do. I'm always asking: 'Do we have the right parts in depth on the shelf to sustain ourselves in a near-peer conflict?" Gabram said.

"For more than 15 years, we've been operating on a just-in-time basis. We must have depth and predictability in our supply chain to anticipate our Soldiers' needs in a large-scale combat operation. A combat environment against a near-pear competitor will be much different than today's conditions and it might occur at the same time we are conducting our current operations. To strengthen our position, we have identified key readiness drivers for every one of our aircraft platforms and missile systems."

AMCOM Logistics Center personnel identified the top 10 readiness drivers for all of AMCOM's aviation and missile platforms, and defined sufficient stock on hand. A readiness driver is a critical repair part that will deadline a system and is essential for equipment operation. AMCOM defines sufficient stock to be three times the average monthly demand with no backorders over 30 days. Identifying and stocking the readiness drivers are a means of prioritizing how to go after the goal of supply availability. Identifying the top 10 readiness drivers was a major initiative toward building supply availability.

These are just some of the initiatives that Gabram spearheaded during his three years as commander. The AMCOM team continues to ensure Aviation and air defense artillery units are not only prepared for the current and future combat operations, but are configured appropriately to be sustained for the duration. The Army must have a robust supply chain that can endure and respond to a complex, rapidly evolving, strategic landscape. As Gabram often pointed out, "a combat environment against a near-peer competitor will likely be characterized by surging supply chain demands, interrupted lines of communication and extended expeditionary operations." Supply chain depth enables AMCOM to anticipate and quickly respond to surges in materiel demand due to spikes in operating tempo.

The AMCOM team represents the major spoke of the aviation and missile enterprise. AMCOM has continued to support Soldiers every day through its two depots, field maintenance sites, calibration support elements, installation maintenance activities, security assistance, training center support and much more.

Great organizations adapt and fight the enemy, not the plan. AMCOM, in coordination with the Aviation and Missile Enterprises and industry partners, has made great strides in improving readiness. AMCOM is shaping the fight and setting conditions to remain flexible and successful. Those efforts are changing the way AMCOM sustains readiness.

"As the Chief of Staff of the Army makes a ready and modern Army his top priority. AMCOM will provide that readiness," Gabram said.

"I have a great sense of satisfaction in seeing the programs we built here at AMCOM," Gabram said. "AMCOM has and continues to posture itself for the future, enabling readiness to meet the emerging global requirements of the joint force. The world-class logistics and sustainment AMCOM provides was not built overnight. It was built through the hard work and dedication of the entire AMCOM team."

Note: On Feb. 19, Maj. Gen. Gabram assumed the duties at his new position as the Director of Test, Missile Defense Agency, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. Mr. William Marriott, who formerly served as the AMCOM Deputy to the Commander, is currently serving as the AMCOM Executive Director. Marriott will fill the position until the new commander assumes command this summer.